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ABSTRACT

Two surveys were conducted to find the availability of officiating classes in colleges across the nation, to share information about the organization of these officiating classes, and to find the methods by which officials first learn how to officiate. The first survey was directed toward colleges with professional physical education programs. Of the 95 colleges surveyed (with 60 responding), 52 percent indicated the existence of some type of officiating class. Thirteen courses were listed as separate courses for specific sports, and 18 courses were listed as paired courses (two or more sports covered in one course). The second survey was directed to the National Association for Girls and Women in Sport (NAGWS), to volleyball officials with national ratings. Of all the officials surveyed, 32 percent had learned to officiate through professional classes. Some problems associated with offering officiating courses were: a lack of qualified instructors, little or no student interest, and/or the lack of available hours in the curriculum. Some solutions to these problems are to hire adjunct instructors from outside the university, work cooperatively with the intramural programs to offer training for their officials, and offer officiating courses as elective courses. Three key issues for officiating classes in the 1990s are: legal liability, ethics, and the psychology of officiating. (JD)

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1990 AAHPERD NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, Louisiana

"Officiating Classes as Part of the Physical Education Curriculum"

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Can you imagine a sports contest with no officials? If we do not continue to recruit officials through officiating classes in the professional physical education curricula, where will the officials of the future be trained? Currently, how are successful sports officials trained? How prevalent are officiating courses in the curricula of colleges across the nation?

Two surveys were conducted to find the answers to these questions; one was a survey of colleges with professional physical education programs, and one was a survey of NAGWS volleyball officials with national ratings. The motivation for both these surveys was to verify the need for including officiating classes in the professional curricula in order to increase the recruiting of officials. Another purpose of the surveys was to share ideas about the teaching and organization of officiating classes.

In the college/university survey, 60 of the 95 schools returned surveys, which reflects a 63% return rate. Of those 60 schools, 31 schools offer at least one officiating course (52%). One school offered as many as 11 separate officiating courses. Thirteen courses were listed as separate courses for specific sports, and 18 courses were listed as paired courses of 2 or more sports covered in one course. Six schools have officiating courses in their curricula, but have not offered them in several years due to a lack of qualified instructors. The specific sport areas most often offered in officiating classes were basketball (28 schools, 90%), volleyball (25 schools, 81%), baseball/softball (22 schools, 71%), football (19 schools, 61%), and soccer (10 schools, 32%).

Of those schools which do not offer any officiating courses, only one school indicated an interest in offering an officiating course in the future. The reasons most often given for not offering an officiating course were no student interest, no one qualified to teach it, and not enough available hours in the curriculum to justify its inclusion.

Every college representative which returned a survey indicated the existence of an active intramural program at their school. In 43 schools (72%), the intramural officials are trained by intramural personnel. In 13 schools (22%), the officials are trained through an officiating class which is taught in the professional curricula.

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In regard to the survey of NAGWS nationally rated volleyball officials, 41 of 72 surveys were returned (57% return rate). Of all the officials surveyed, 13 officials (32%) learned to officiate through professional classes. Twelve officials (29%) learned to officiate from a sport-specific group (United States Volleyball Association). Five officials learned to officiate through an intramural program (12%).

Of those officials returning the survey, 20 (49%) of them indicated there were other opportunities to take officiating courses at colleges/universities in their geographic areas. They also listed local/state officiating organizations, sport-specific groups, recreation departments, summer sport camps, church organizations, adult education classes, coach's clinics, and the YMCA as organizations which train officials in their geographic areas.

Thirty-three officials (80%) hold only a volleyball rating and do not officiate any other sports during the year. Thirty-seven officials (90%) are still actively involved in the training of new officials. These statistics show a trend toward being a sport-specific official (as are athletes at this time), and toward officials being actively involved in the training of new officials to perpetuate the trade of officiating in their locale.

The results of these surveys are encouraging for those of us who believe that officiating classes play a vital part in the recruitment of officials. Over half of the colleges surveyed are still offering some type of officiating course or courses. One-third of the officials surveyed learned to officiate from an officiating course. Almost a fourth of the intramural officials are being trained through an officiating class in the professional curricula of their colleges.

How does a school/university begin to organize an officiating course for their professional curriculum? First of all, a need for the course has to be established. From the survey, many colleges indicated there is little or no student interest for officiating. The first place to look for establishing the need is the intramural program. More cooperation and communication between intramural and professional programs is necessary to provide officiating courses for credit to intramural or prospective officials.

Secondly, an instructor must be available who is qualified to teach the officiating course. Many professional programs have experienced officials on their faculty, or current or former coaches who have also been proven to be qualified to teach officiating courses. An adjunct teacher (person outside the college/university) who is experienced in officiating can also be hired to teach the course or courses.

Thirdly, the course must fit in the credit hours allowed in the curriculum. If an officiating course does not fit into the required curriculum, it easily can be taken as an elective. The elective status is probably more desirable, since it would be open to those students in the university who are not enrolled in the professional physical education curriculum.

There must be a justification for offering the course in the professional curriculum. The most obvious justification is to improve the quality of officiating for the future. The enhancement of the intramural program is always a desired outcome for offering an officiating course. Administrators are always impressed with interdepartmental cooperation and communication which will benefit both programs.

Objectives or goals for the officiating course must be established to plan the content and guide the evaluation of students. The most common objectives of officiating courses are to:

1. understand and interpret the rules;
2. learn mechanics and techniques;
3. apply the rules to practice and game situations;
4. acquire a knowledge of game skills and strategies;
5. demonstrate the proper use of signals;
6. identify duties/responsibilities of each official; and
7. discuss the problems associated with officiating.

Some other objectives which could possibly be included are to:

1. earn a rating;
2. discuss the qualifications/qualities of a successful official;
3. learn how to become involved in an officials' organization;
4. discuss ways of overcoming fear; and
5. learn a code of ethics for officiating.

Areas for concern in the 1990s will be ethics, legal liability, and the psychology of officiating. These topics should be included in the objectives and as content in officiating courses for the future.

A textbook should be required for all officiating courses, at least a specific rulebook from the governing organization for that sport. Paired courses, which cover rules for a variety of different sports, could use more general officiating books such as Modern Sports Officiating by Clegg and Thompson (1989). Supplementary resources may be utilized, such as:

1. teacher-made packets;
2. casebooks published by separate sport organizations;
3. articles in National Federation News on officiating; or
4. articles in REFEREE magazine on sport officiating.

Other textbooks are becoming available on the legal aspects of officiating and the psychology of officiating.

Since the content of officiating courses involves the memorization of rules and their application to a sport contest, a great deal of information has to be covered in a short period of time. Because of this, the teaching method most often used for officiating courses is the lecture method. However, the information can be organized and presented in more motivating ways, such as:

1. conducting class discussions of rule interpretations;
2. showing slide presentations of officials in practical situations;
3. videotaping students officiating in a practical setting;
4. using partner evaluations for constructive criticism;
5. using overhead projection to demonstrate positioning of officials or scoring techniques;
6. the instructor demonstrating officiating techniques;
7. using circuit stations for review of rules/techniques; and
8. inviting experienced officials as guest speakers.

It is important to match the best teaching method with the content to be covered. Be creative in your approach!

Evaluation of officials in a class setting should be similar to the evaluation of officials done in officials' organizations. For the most part, this consists of 50% written evaluation by examinations and 50% evaluation by practical ratings during actual competition. Written evaluations may be achieved through midterm or final examinations or by daily quizzes. Daily quizzes may be more desirable because the student is forced to use distributed practice to learn rules and techniques. Practical evaluations may be achieved through intramural competition, activity class competition during the actual officiating class period, high school competition, or recreation league competition. However, administrative problems may occur with high school or recreation league evaluation.

There are other methods of grading in an officiating course which will enhance the learning of prospective officials. Thes include:

1. a written individual journal of games/matches officiated;
2. self-evaluations of performance after games/matches;
3. a written statement of philosophy of officiating;
4. critiques of officiated games observed;
5. attendance at officiating clinics;
6. an annotated bibliography of officiating articles/books; and
7. a written account of an interview with a professional official.

These grading ideas may supplement the written/practical evaluation of students in class.

The professional physical education curriculum is not the only avenue for providing officiating classes. In most communities, adult education classes are offered by various organizations for adults to learn various trades after work. Officials who are interested in teaching officiating may do so through adult education programs, which also offers them some type of monetary benefit. Recreation programs are always looking for professionals to do clinics or teach classes for their officials. A possibility for the future is the teaching of officiating in conjunction with summer coaching clinics and camps.

The results of these surveys should challenge professional physical educators to find ways of including more officiating courses in the curriculum. More professional officials need to be recruited to teach the courses, if no faculty are experienced in officiating. Interdepartmental cooperation should be encouraged between the intramural and physical education faculty to fulfill the need for trained officials in the intramural departments. Finally, officiating courses need to be updated toward the key issues of the 1990s: ethics, legal liability, and the psychology of officiating. If these goals can be achieved, officiating classes will be the major source for recruiting in the future.